

Message Text

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15

ACTION NEA-09

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FM AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 3325

INFO AMEMBASSY AMMAN

AMEMBASSY BEIRUT

AMEMBASSY CAIRO

AMCONSUL JERUSALEM

AMEMBASSY JIDDA

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PFOR, SY

SUBJ: SYRIAN EDITORIAL OPINION ASSESSES CURRENT PRE-GENEVA
SITUATION

1. SUMMARY: DAMASCUS' LEAD EDITORIALS OVER PAST THREE DAYS

COMMENT: A) ALTHOUGH ARABS WILLING GIVE EVERY
OPPORTUNITY TO POLITICAL SETTLEMENT THEY WILL RESORT
TO WAR IF POLITICAL MOVEMENT FAILS; B) ARABS SHOULD
BEWARE OF RENEWED IMPERIALIST FOCUS ON MIDDLE EAST NOW
THAT IMPERIALISM HAS BEEN DEFEATED IN SEA; C) GREATER
ARAB DETERMINATION AND MORE U.S. PRESSURE ON ISRAEL
NECESSARY FOR SUCCESSFUL GENEVA CONFERENCE. LATTER
EDITORIAL MAY FAITHFULLY REFLECT GROWING SARG
AWARENESS OF DIFFICULTY OF ORGANIZING GENEVA. END SUMMARY.

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2. AL-BAATH EDITOR SABIR FALHUT WROTE APRIL 28 THAT PRESENT SITUATION "EXPLOSIVE" BECAUSE ARABS UNABLE ACCEPT CONTINUATION ISRAELI OCCUPATION. ALTERNATIVE TO POLITICAL ROAD "TO WHICH WE WILL GIVE EVERY OPPORTUNITY" IS "RESORT TO WEAPON OF OCTOBER." SYRIAN MASSES AWARE THAT "WHILE SUPPORTING THE POLITICAL BATTLE, PREPARATION FOR MILITARY BATTLE HAS NOT CEASED." SYRIA IS CONTINUALLY GAINING MORE SUPPORTERS FOR ITS CAUSE, AND IS PREPARED FOR ALL EVENTUALITIES.

3. AL-THAWRAH EDITOR ALI SULAYMAN APRIL 29 WARNED ARABS TO BEWARE OF ATTEMPTS BY "IMPERIALISM" TO MAKE UP FOR ITS LOSSES IN CAMBODIA AND VIETNAM BY SHIFTING ITS FOCUS TO MIDDLE EAST, AN AREA WHICH CONTAINS "ALL APPETIZERS WHICH DRIVE IMPERIALISM TOWARD ADVENTURISM AND STUBBORNESS." ISRAEL OF COURSE WILL FIND JUSTIFICATION FOR ITS POLICY OF OCCUPATION IN THE DOWNFALL OF "AGENTS OF IMPERIALISM," AND WILL BECOME MORE STUBBORN AND AGGRESSIVE. SULAYMAN CONCLUDES WITH GRIM ANTICIPATION OF "LONG TERM STATE OF EBB AND FLOW AND SERIES OF POSTPONEMENTS, PROMISES AND EXPOSURE TO CONFLICTING CURRENTS" WITHIN MIDDLE EAST. BUT THE ARABS MUST DRAW THE PROPER LESSON FROM THE EVENTS IN SEA, WHICH IS PROOF THAT "ONLY WAY TO EXPEL AGGRESSORS IS SELF-RELIANCE AND CHOOSING ROAD WHICH SECURED FOR SEA PEOPLE VICTORY OVER IMPERIALISM AND ITS AGENTS."

4. SULAYMAN FRONT-PAGED ANOTHER EDITORIAL IN APRIL 30 AL-THAWRAH. AFTER FAILURE OF KISSINGER MISSION WHICH WAS U.S. SUBSTITUTE FOR GENEVA, HE STATED, "TODAY COMES ROLE OF OTHER ROAD CHOSEN BY SOVIET UNION AND NUMBER OF ARABS IN NEW ATTEMPT TO REACH JUST AND DURABLE PEACE." PROBLEM IS NOT WHETHER EFFORTS DIRECTED TOWARD MIDDLE EAST OR GENEVA BECAUSE "I DO NOT IMAGINE THAT ISRAEL WOULD ACCEPT IN GENEVA WHAT IT TURNED DOWN HERE AT THE HANDS OF DR. KISSINGER." ISRAEL'S POSITION WILL NOT CHANGE IN ABSENCE TWO FACTORS: "ARAB DETERMINATION ON CONFRONTATION" AND "EFFECTIVE AMERICAN PRESSURE ON ISRAEL." WHILE ADMITTING THAT ARABS HAVE CALLED FOR GENEVA, SULAYMAN FORESEES THAT "WITHOUT ENSURING THESE TWO FACTORS OR LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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ONE OF THEM GENEVA WOULD BE DEADLOCKED." SULAYMAN STATES "CONVENING GENEVA WILL MOVE US AFTER MORE THAN ONE AND ONE-HALF YEARS OF LITTLE STEPS TOWARD FACING RESPONSIBILITY ITSELF AND FACING FACTS THEMSELVES. WHAT HAVE WE PREPARED FOR GENEVA?" HE GOES ON TO SAY THAT EFFECTIVENESS OF GENEVA WILL BE CHIEFLY DECIDED BY ARABS, AND ADDS THAT IF POLITICAL MEASURES FAIL ARABS CAPABLE OF RETURNING TO FIELD OF ARMED CONFRONTATION. HE CONCLUDES WITH A SERIES

OF QUESTIONS: "HAVE WE PREPARED OURSELVES? HAS THE EQUILIBRIUM WHICH ALLOWED ISRAEL ONE AND ONE-HALF YEARS OF PROCRASTINATION, POSTPONEMENT AND TIME CHANGED? HAS ISRAEL UNDERSTOOD THE MEANINGS OF VARIABLES IN THE WORLD AND ACCORDINGLY CHANGED ITS POSITION? IT WOULD BE USEFUL TO REVIEW EXAMPLE OF VIETNAM WITH ITS NUMEROUS MEANINGS AND ASK OURSELVES WHERE THE PARIS NEGOTIATIONS LED THE VIETNAMESE QUESTION, AS WELL AS WHAT ARE ELEMENTS THAT HAVE FINALIZED STRUGGLE THERE. REPLIES TO THESE QUESTIONS OUTLINE SIGNS OF THE ROAD TO GENEVA."

5. COMMENT: APRIL 30 SULAYMAN EDITORIAL IS FOR DAMASCUS PRESS AN UNUSUALLY THOUGHTFUL COMMENTARY. ITS RESTRAINED TONE, GENERAL ABSENCE OF RHETORICAL OVERKILL AND SOMBER READING OF RESPONSIBILITY CONFRONTING ARABS AT GENEVA REFLECT ATTITUDE OF THE MORE THOUGHTFUL SYRIANS WHO ARE BEGINNING TO APPRECIATE COMPLEXITIES OF ORGANIZING A SUCCESSFUL GENEVA CONFERENCE.
MURPHY

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